


*Artistic Interpretations of Purgatorial Punishment and The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499 )**

**by**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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## Abstract

Ideas about the afterlife are prevalent in almost all cultures and have changed significantly since the first person told the first story of where we end up after death. Even though Purgatory was formalized as Catholic doctrine in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the concept is still common in our culture today. This project seeks to address the change that has occurred in the way in which Purgatory has been artistically represented in the last eight hundred years and specifically how it is represented in the contemporary play, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. I analyzed the purgatorial representation in this play through the completion of a dramaturgy project assigned by the Department of Theatre and Dance. This project included creating a dramaturgy website, lobby display and facilitating a panel discussion and talkback on the themes present in the play in conjunction with another student, Matt Gauen. To compliment this shared project I also wrote a paper on artistic representations of purgatorial punishment and how it has changed in the last eight hundred years due to societal alterations. The dramaturgical project and the research paper combine to give both specific and broad information concerning artistic representations of purgatorial punishment and demonstrate the societal forces that influence these manifestations.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Tyler Smith for advising this Honors thesis and for all of the support that he has given me throughout my academic career. I have been blessed with having the opportunity to take part in one of his classes every semester that I was on campus and I have thoroughly enjoyed every one.

I would also like to thank my family, Katie, Amanda, Rachael, Jessica, Matt and Aaron who have given me encouragement and support throughout this long and sometimes frustrating process.



## Artist's Statement

A once in a lifetime opportunity, this is what being the co-dramaturg for *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* meant for me. A majority of directing classes have used the play for analysis and most of the Department of Theatre and Dance have read it, so being able to contribute to the production was a dream come true for me. Due to the large amount of cultural references and deep philosophical questions, Matt Gauen (another senior) and I were assigned the dramaturgy project together. This proved useful when we were later asked to lead a panel discussion and talkback centering on the themes of *Judas*. Together we came up with much better ideas concerning the questions and themes than I ever would have by myself.

With this thesis project my goal is to reconcile my major in theatre with my minor in history to create living and believable history on stage. Although *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* is a contemporary play, many of the characters are firmly rooted in secular and religious history, and it was a nice challenge to find source material that would help the actors to embody these roles. For the actors, director and designers, we created a website which included an extensive glossary defining some of the more obscure terms used in the play, brief historical character descriptions and general information on religion and past productions. I believe the job of a dramaturg is to add authenticity to the world of the production, and it was our goal to do that with the research that we presented to the cast and production team.

In an effort to continue helping the cast create an authentic world I went to at least two rehearsals a week and was asked some fairly odd questions. My favorite from the director was 'Can you get herpes in the afterlife?' This question puzzled me for weeks, but provided a fun challenge to tackle with my research. It turns out that once the body has died the soul is no longer able to sin, which means that the lustful sex that would result in an STI would not be possible in the first place. If by answering this question the world of the play was made a little clearer to the director, then I believe that I have done my job as dramaturg.

It is also the job of the dramaturg to answer the questions of the audience, and to do that we created a lobby display that highlighted some interesting aspects of the play. We chose to discuss philosophical perspectives on some of the questions raised in the play as well as investigate the changing artistic vision of Purgatory through the last 800 years. Thus the audience was informed about both the ideas introduced in the play as well as the setting of the play itself. We also included an area where the audience could voice their opinions on whether Judas was innocent or guilty and whether that was due to fate or free will.

The last element of my thesis is a paper on artistic representations of purgatorial punishment and how they have evolved with the changes in society. This marries historical writing with an otherwise very theatre-oriented project. The research paper tracks the changes in the way Purgatory is artistically represented while commenting on the lack of change in the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. The elements combine into a project that both examines history and seeks to reproduce it on stage, which is one of my lifetime career goals.

## Dramaturgical Website Breakdown

The purpose of a dramaturgy website is to have a place that the actors, director or designers can access at any time which contains pertinent information that has the potential to clarify the play and the vast number of cultural references in it. There is also the possibility that the information we provide could influence the choices that are made in directing, acting or designing, so we are charged with choosing it carefully. Since Matt and I contributed equally to the content of this website, below is a detailed breakdown of the information that was either contributed by a single person or by combined efforts.

Website: <http://lastdaysbsu.weebly.com>

### Page Creators

Home Page: Matt

Banner Images: Combined Effort

Blog Page: Teah – Any questions that were received during the rehearsal process were posted on this page along with the answers that I had found in my research.

Playwright Biography Page: Matt

Glossary Page: Matt and I split the play in half by Act 1 and Act 2 when we were faced with the daunting task of defining all of the religious and popular culture terms that are present in the play. I defined the terms in Act 2, which contains a fair amount of unfamiliar words for being a contemporary play.

Religion 101: Matt

Character Description: Again Matt and I split the task of this section and I was personally responsible for researching Saint Monica, Mother Teresa, Sister Glenna, Simon the Zealot, Mary Magdalene, Sigmund Freud.

Past Productions: I was responsible for this section which compared the critical response to various productions of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. It revealed that the play has literary merit but tends to be a little long for the average audience member.

Miscellaneous: I created this section as a repository for anything that did not fit neatly into the other sections, such as a diagram of Dante's *Inferno*.

### Sources Consulted

Blog: Catholic Encyclopedia – newadvent.org

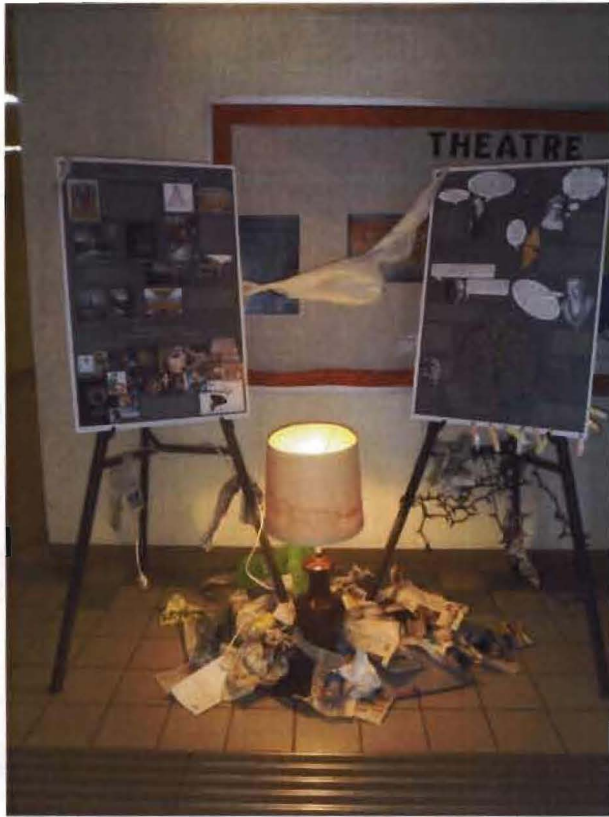
Glossary: Encyclopedia Britannica, Oxford English Dictionary, Miriam Webster Dictionary, Internet Movie Database

Character Descriptions: Catholic Encyclopedia – newadvent.org,  
<http://www.ibvm.ca/news/2007/02/21/ibvm-nun-receives-indias-highest-civilian-award>,  
Encyclopedia Britannica

Past Productions: <http://theatre-louisville.blogspot.com/2011/04/review-last-days-of-judas-iscariot.html>, <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/arts/2011/11/11/judas-trial-theater-review.html>

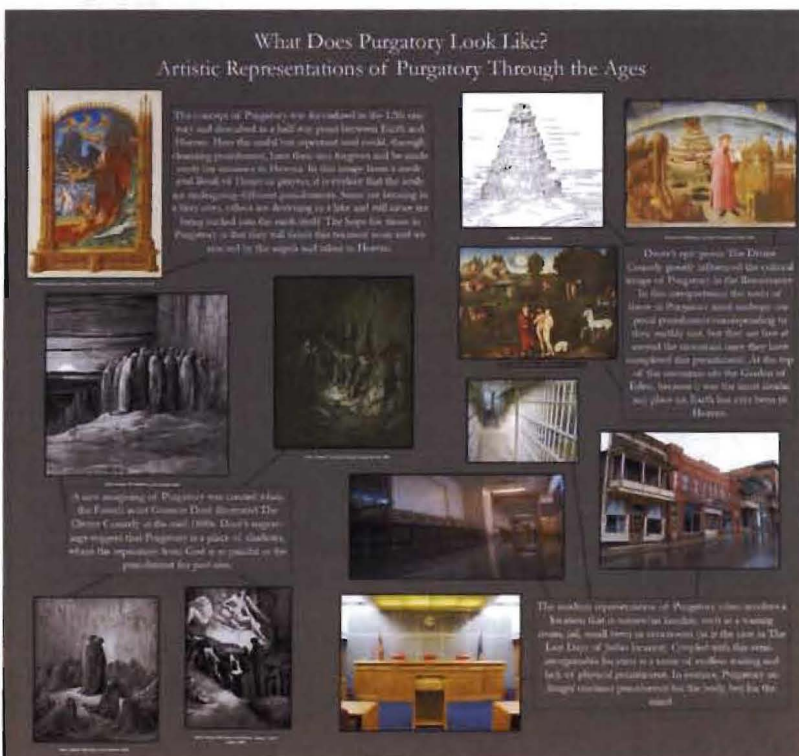


## Lobby Display



the right and I created the one on the left, which is discussed in depth below.

One of the most interesting pieces of dramaturgy to create is the lobby display. Normally those created for plays in Strother Theatre are not this elaborate, but Matt and I decided that we wanted to keep with the atmosphere of the play and thus our display includes some trash to enhance the ambiance. The purpose of a lobby display is to enhance the audience's experience and understanding of the play by providing additional information and some sort of interactive experience, if possible. The poster on the right includes quotes by famous philosophers that pertain to the ideas in the play as well as a circular scale onto which audience members can place a sticker to indicate whether Judas was guilty or not guilty and whether this was due to fate or free will. We had a fairly good response to the audience participation portion and logged about 70 stickers. Matt created the poster on



The two sections of the board that I created are entitled 'What Does Purgatory Look Like?' and 'Whose Message is it Anyway?' The top section includes a presentation of the artistic representations of Purgatory throughout history. It briefly discusses how the image of Purgatory has changed through the ages, from the formalization of the Catholic doctrine in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the contemporary era that was represented in the play, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Below are the individual sections from the poster in a size that is actually readable.

## The Middle Ages



Paul, Hermanus and Jean LeClerc: Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry 1412-1416.

The concept of Purgatory was formalized in the 12th century and described as a half-way point between Earth and Heaven. Here the sinful but repentant soul could, through cleansing punishment, have their sins forgiven and be made ready for entrance to Heaven. In this image from a medieval Book of Hours or prayers, it is evident that the souls are undergoing different punishments. Some are burning in a fiery river, others are drowning in a lake and still more are being sucked into the earth itself. The hope for those in Purgatory is that they will finish this torment soon and be rescued by the angels and taken to Heaven.

## The Renaissance



Diagram of Dante's Purgatory



Domenico di Michelino: La Divina Commedia di Dante, 1405.



Lucas Cranach the Elder: Adam and Eve in Paradise, 1530.



Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy* greatly influenced the cultural image of Purgatory in the Renaissance.

In this interpretation the souls of those in Purgatory must undergo corporal punishment corresponding to their earthly sins, but they are free to ascend the mountain once they have completed this punishment. At the top of the mountain sits the Garden of Eden, because it was the most similar any place on Earth has ever been to Heaven.



## The Mid- 1800s

Paul, Henriette, and Jean LeClerc: Les Trois Heures du Jour, De Berry, 1813-1814.



Doré, Gustave: The Sun's Passing Through the Fire, 1864.

Doré, Gustave: The Ministry of the Devil, 1864.

A new imagining of Purgatory was created when the French artist Gustave Doré illustrated The Divine Comedy in the mid-1800s. Doré's engravings suggest that Purgatory is a place of shadows, where the separation from God is as painful as the punishment for past sins.



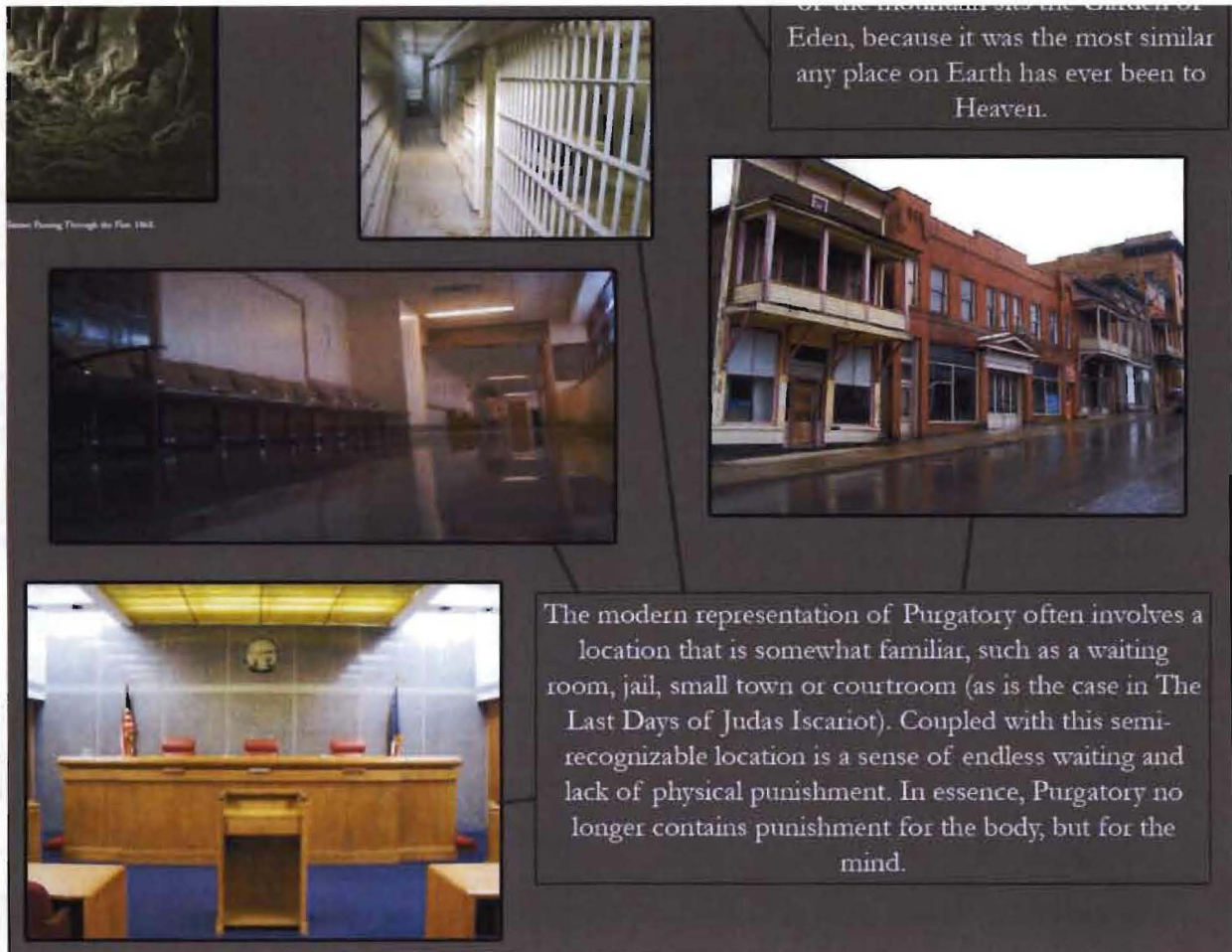
Doré, Gustave: The Soul of the Sinner, 1864.



Doré, Gustave: The Soul of the Sinner, 1864.



## Modern Era

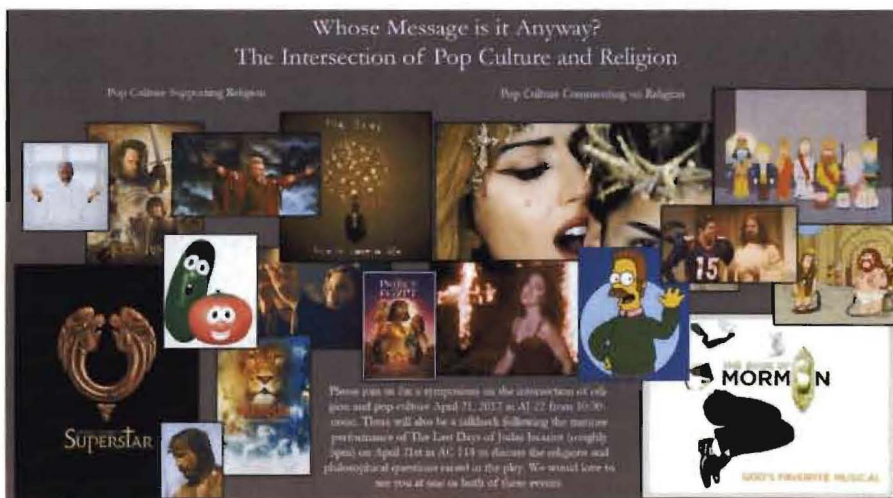


OF THE MOUNTAIN SAYS THE CHURCH OF Eden, because it was the most similar any place on Earth has ever been to Heaven.

The modern representation of Purgatory often involves a location that is somewhat familiar, such as a waiting room, jail, small town or courtroom (as is the case in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*). Coupled with this semi-recognizable location is a sense of endless waiting and lack of physical punishment. In essence, Purgatory no longer contains punishment for the body, but for the mind.

### Whose Message is it Anyway? The Intersection of Pop Culture and Religion

Pop Culture Supporting Religion      Pop Culture Commenting on Religion



These panels are in response to the intersection of religion and pop culture April 21, 2017 at 11:22 from 10:30-11:00. There will also be a talkback following the movie performance of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* tonight April 21st at 8:00 PM in the church and philosophical questions raised in the play. We would love to see you at one or both of these events.

The bottom section of the poster was used to promote a panel discussion and talk-back that Matt and I hosted in conjunction with the performances of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. These events will be discussed later in the project.



Please join us for a symposium on the intersection of religion and pop culture April 21, 2012 in AJ 22 from 10:30-noon. There will also be a talkback following the matinee performance of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (roughly 5pm) on April 21st in AC 114 to discuss the religious and philosophical questions raised in the play. We would love to see you at one or both of these events.

Enlargement of the text advertising the talkback and panel discussion

### What Does Purgatory Look Like?

#### Artistic Representations of Purgatory Through the Ages



The concept of Purgatory was formalized in the 13th and 14th centuries as a half-way point between Hell and Heaven. Here the souls live in a state of suffering, but through cleansing purification, they find their way to Heaven. In this image from a 15th-century French manuscript, it is evident that the souls are undergoing different punishments. Some are burning in a fiery oven, others are drowning in a lake and still others are being cooked on the wheel. The hope for those in Purgatory is that they will reach the moment when they are welcomed by the angels and taken to Heaven.



Thomas's new poem, *The House*, explores the concept of Purgatory in the modern world. In the poem, the speaker describes the modern world as a place of suffering and purification. The speaker is a man who has been through a difficult journey and is now in a place of suffering. The speaker is a man who has been through a difficult journey and is now in a place of suffering.



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### Whose Message is it Anyway?

#### The Intersection of Pop Culture and Religion



Pop Culture Representing Religion



Pop Culture Countering Religion

Please join us for a symposium on the intersection of religion and pop culture April 21, 2012 in AJ 22 from 10:30-noon. There will also be a talkback following the matinee performance of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (roughly 5pm) on April 21st in AC 114 to discuss the religious and philosophical questions raised in the play. We would love to see you at one or both of these events.

All of the elements combined equal the poster above.





To enhance the display Matt and I decided to expand the world that was created for the play into the lobby. Karen Kessler, the director, introduced the idea that Purgatory is where all of the cast-off items of life accumulate. We tried to integrate that into the lobby display by collecting cast-off items from the props department and recycling bins. Drawing inspiration from the set design by Delena Bradley we gathered a water stained lamp and general detritus to give the audience the feeling

that Purgatory was encroaching on our world. Since the lobby display was meant to bridge the gap between play and audience, it is fitting that a little of their reality leaked into ours.

## Panel Discussion / Talkback Reactions

Karen Kessler, the director of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* thought that it would be a good idea to have several events in which we could discuss some of the ideas and issues raised by the play. Out of this desire the symposium and talkback were born and at each event I learned valuable lessons concerning audience participation and leading discussion-based events.

### Panel Discussion or Symposium:

This event took place the last Saturday morning that *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* was being performed. The discussion centered on the intersection of religion and pop culture and involved the following questions:

Who is controlling the religious message?

How far is too far?

How does art and pop culture market the religious message to the masses?

Is this marketing working?

What is the future of religion in art?

Even though we only had four participants and two panelists other and myself and Matt, the discussion lasted an hour and a half and everyone left having their voice heard. To demonstrate the connection between religion and pop culture we used clips from South Park, Bruce Almighty and other current media to stimulate conversation. My favorite point that was brought up was that you can find God in anything or you can find God in nothing. Some of the respondents viewed all art as an expression of the gifts that God has given humanity and some preferred to view art with a more humanistic approach. We discussed whether the religious message was impactful to non-religious audience members. The conclusion that was agreed upon was that if an audience member wanted to see the religious message in *The Lord of the Rings* they would, but if they preferred to view it as a well done fantasy movie, it could be interpreted in that way as well. Another point that was brought up is that the Christian film industry needs to create better art. There are a lot of recent films that contain religious messages, but much of the film that is created for the Christian religious community by that community has poor writing and production. If Christian filmmakers in particular want to reach a broader audience than those who already share the same views, they need to create films that have more artistic value and include fewer sermons. Matt and I were ecstatic that there was such a good discussion even though attendance was lower than we would have liked.

## Talkback:

This event took place later that Saturday after a matinee of the show and there were only three participants other than myself and Matt despite a large publicity campaign. Never ones to shy away from a discussion Matt and I led the talkback with three people where we discussed the theme of taking responsibility for your own salvation and whether the participants believed that Judas was guilty or not and why. We ended up having a half an hour discussion with three enthusiastic people, and I am glad that we could help them process the show. One of the comments that were made in the talkback was that in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* the saints were able to choose whatever form they wanted to inhabit. This explains why Saint Monica, who in all reality would have been a middle-aged North African woman, appeared as a foul-mouthed Hispanic 20-something. Since most of the saints continued to inhabit their bodies from religious history, Saint Monica's drastic choice was a little confusing to the audience. We also received many reactions to the question about whether Judas was guilty or innocent and if his actions were fate or free will. One of the members of the talkback concluded that Judas had to betray Jesus for Christianity to begin and thus Judas was innocent due to his choice being pre-decided by fate. Another respondent argued that Judas was guilty because even if Jesus knew he was going to betray Christ, Judas still made the decision to do so. Overall, it was a great discussion considering how few people were present.



## Artistic Representations of Purgatorial Punishment

“Between heaven and hell –there is another place” (Guirgis 8). In the first line of the first scene of Stephen Adly Guirgis’ play, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, the angel Gloria sets the scene with this short phrase. The majority of the action of the play takes place in Purgatory, which, for the purposes of the play is reminiscent of a grungy New York City. It is here that souls are put on trial for their earthly sins and forced to work through their troubles before they are allowed to enter the kingdom of Heaven. It would be difficult to imagine a better location for all of the misfit and wandering souls in the afterlife than a grungy city, which are usually the repository for immigrants and misfits on Earth. These are souls who have yet to find their place; they are not humble enough to admit their faults and enter Heaven, but they have also not yet succumbed to despair and sunk into Hell.

Purgatory is often represented in artistic works and has taken on various characteristics throughout the centuries. Perhaps the most iconic interpretations of this state of the afterlife are the purifying flames of the Middle Ages, the diverse tortures of the steep mountain of Dante’s *Purgatorio* in the Renaissance and the agonizing waiting of Guirgis’ play, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, in the twentieth century. Artistic, literary and theatrical trends tend to mirror societal characteristics as a whole, and the previous depictions of Purgatory and its punishments are no exception. Over the centuries artistic depictions of Purgatory have changed based on the major cultural influences of the era. Although it was originally presented in art as a place of purification through corporal punishment, it has become a place of retribution through the mental torture of uncertain waiting. This mirrors society’s changing definition of punishment, from corporal to mental. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were many physical punishments that were prevalent in the schools, judicial systems and everyday life of western society. After the turn of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century western civilization has shied away from many of these corporal punishments and thus the penalty for most disobedience has become endless waiting and separation from others. This shift is an interesting study of societal influences, since the Catholic doctrine concerning Purgatory has remained relatively consistent throughout the centuries. This would suggest that artistic representations of Purgatory are more reliant on the society in which they are created than on the doctrine that they represent.

The Middle Ages were a long and physically difficult time in the history of Western Europe. This period is characterized by a feudal social structure in which peasants were owned with the land that they farmed and lords were vassals of other lords. There were many small kingdoms, which led to frequent battles between rulers in an attempt to gain more land. Society became dependant on the manor or castle as the cultural center point of existence and there was little to no movement among the peasant class. Life consisted of taking care of the manor, growing enough food to feed those in the manor and the surrounding village and attending the village church (Brace 21-23). Some trade resurfaced in the High Middle Ages and many trading towns grew into cities, but along with trade came the Black Plague (Spielvogel 162). This fourteenth century scourge was carried by fleas from China along trade routes and led to the death of about a third of the population of Western Europe (Spielvogel 197). In this time when peasants constituted a large portion of the population, labor was plentiful, life was conducted in a small geographic area and death was an omnipresent possibility.

Corporal punishment as a penalty for crime was also extremely common during this time, especially for the lower classes. The aristocracy on the other hand was usually fined for their transgressions, which included a price that could be paid for the death of a person according to their rank and physical capacity. This means that if an aristocrat killed a man, he could simply

pay the family a set price for the life of that person and he was once again in good standing with the law. "The inability of lower-class evildoers to pay fines in money led to the substitution of corporal punishment in their case" (Rusche 9). In this way, the aristocracy did not have to worry about being physically punished for their crimes, but for peasants, who constituted most of the population, corporal punishment was a constant threat. For stealing a loaf of bread a person could be punished by whipping, having their neck shackled to a post, losing an ear or being hung, depending on the monetary value of the bread (Adams 122). Many crimes were punishable by death or mutilation if the perpetrator did not have the money to pay the fine. Thieves were often left dangling where they were hung, so that their corpses could be deterrents to others who might try to commit the same crime. Even the religious leaders of the time advocated using a strong hand when ruling the populous (Rusche 21-22). "Luther, for example, said that mere execution was not sufficient punishment and that rulers should pursue, beat, strangle, hang, burn and torture the mob [common unruly men] in every way" (Rusche 22). If a man could be killed for stealing a loaf of bread and even the religious leaders said that this was fair and righteous, how could the population expect leniency in the purifying punishments of Purgatory? Since life and punishment were harsh, death was always present and serfs (peasants tied to the land) had very little control over their fates on earth, it is understandable that purgatory would also be a place of punishment where a higher power had total control over where the soul ended up.

Purgatory was formalized as Catholic doctrine in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, part of the Late Middle Ages. Purgatory is part of the Catholic idea of the afterlife and is defined as "...a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are, not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions" (Hanna). This means that after a person dies, they still have to atone for the sins that they



committed during their lives, even if they are on their way to Heaven. Revelation 21.27 states that “but nothing profane shall enter [Heaven], nor anyone who is a liar or has done a detestable act.” This means that the soul must be cleansed of all of its earthly baggage before it is free to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

The history of Purgatory as an official part of the Catholic doctrine began in the Medieval world where the Church was the highest authority and did not shy away from using that power. The Catholic Church in the thirteenth century was at the height of its power in the political, intellectual and secular spheres. Since Europe was almost entirely Catholic during this era, the pope, as the head of this church, exercised an immense amount of influence in the politics of the period. The Church controlled the religious sacraments or rituals which signified important steps for all Catholics, including baptism, marriage and the Eucharist (Spielvogel 185). This allowed the Church immense control over the lives of their parishioners and gave individuals only minimal power to decide their eternal fate. The Church had control over these important earthly and bodily rituals, such as when the Eucharist is transformed into the body of Christ. It is by these corporal rituals that a soul can be made ready for the afterlife, which demonstrates the strong connection that exists between the corporal and the spiritual. It was within this context that the doctrine of Purgatory was formalized and included in common Church teachings. The formalization of the doctrine of Purgatory began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but did not permeate all of Western Europe until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The doctrine was made official in this form in 1274 at the second Council of Lyons. This meant that it was now to be taught by all religious officials and became another step in the long journey to Heaven. Horrox states that “The doctrine of Purgatory, and particularly the belief that the punishment of the soul could be lightened by the prayers of the living, was a theological success story, and its wide acceptance constituted a

significant shift in thinking about death, and about the relationship of the living and the dead” (90). It was now the responsibility of the family to look after person in death as they did in life and, with their prayers, help them progress quickly through Purgatory, so that they could enjoy the everlasting peace of Heaven.

The newly formalized concept of Purgatory combined with the severe punishment of the day is illustrated in the religious art produced during the Middle Ages. Since the Catholic Church was such an influential part of the daily lives of Europeans, it is no wonder that much of the art produced during the Middle Ages deals with religious subject matter. The painting *Les Tres*

*Heures du Duc de Berry* by the Limbourg brothers from 1412-1416, is an image from a medieval Book of Hours or prayers. It is evident that the souls are undergoing different punishments, as some are burning in a fiery river, others are drowning in a lake and still more are being sucked into the earth itself. It is possible that those who are the least visible are the ones that are closer to Hell than Heaven, as the former is usually thought of as being inside the Earth. This would suggest that the ones with the most body exposed are closer to Heaven because they are not tied to Purgatory, nor are they



being sucked into Hell. The hope for those in Purgatory is that they will finish this torment soon



and we rescued by the angels and taken to Heaven. The presence of three different purgatorial punishments suggests a belief that the retribution received in Purgatory will correlate to the sins committed on Earth. Since there were different punishments depending on crime committed in the world, it would make sense that God would correlate the punishment to the crime as well. The purgatorial punishments depicted in this painting also mirror the brutality of those inflicted on Earth. In a society where a person can be publically shackled or even hung for stealing a loaf of bread, it is not hard to imagine where an artist came up with the ideas for such a painting. If a person is punished so severely for stealing food, then what must be the punishment for a transgression against God?

Purgatory was depicted in literature as well. One of the most influential pieces of Purgatorial literature that was written in the Middle Ages is the *Vision of Thurkill*. This story was written in England in October 1206 by Ralph of Coggeshall and Roger of Wendover and the former even translated the tale into Latin (Gardiner 204). In this legend, a peasant from Essex is visited by St. Julian and taken on a tour of Purgatory and Paradise to show him what will happen if he continues tithing less than the mandated ten percent. This journey seems surprisingly similar to the one taken by Dante in his masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*. During his visit to Purgatory, Thurkill witnesses the judgment of the souls by a devil and Saint Paul, for which they use giant scales to weigh their good deeds against their earthly sins. In this legend those who are condemned to purgatorial punishment are sent to a theatre in which they are forced to act out their sins and be punished for them in front of an audience of devils (Gardiner 204-205). This public punishment in Purgatory mirrors the public punishment that took place on Earth, where people were shackled and hung in public. The public aspect of the punishment is important as well, because humans generally hide their sins from the rest of the world, but in Purgatory that is

not an option. The public acting out and punishment of the sin makes it public and adds the penalty of shame to the physical torture being endured by the soul in question. The topography of Thurkill's Purgatory is similar to that in the Book of Hours because it contains "...a purgatorial fire, a cold and salty lake and a bridge with thorns and stakes" (Gardiner 204). A combination of these attributes creates a Purgatory where the punishment is specific to the earthly sin and those sins are no longer allowed to be private. Since the earthly sin defines the punishment, the sin also defines the person. A similar division of sin is also seen in *The Divine Comedy* written by Dante during the Renaissance which leads one to ponder the origin of the idea for the masterful epic poem.

The Renaissance was a rediscovery of classical culture and the prominent thinkers of the time took a renewed interest in the knowledge of the ancients. A resurgence of trade brought Europe in contact with the Middle and Far East, which led to an exchange of ideas and a renewed interest in classical learning. Towns grew with the increased trade and many of them were ruled by wealthy families who controlled the government and usually the largest industry in the town (Spielvogel 216-218). One of the most important intellectual movements of the Renaissance was humanism, which encouraged the study of the classical liberal arts; poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, history and grammar. These academic arts concentrate on the accomplishments of humans and encouraged people to find wisdom and virtue through the study of these arts (Spielvogel 222). The invention of printing allowed ideas to disseminate faster, and encouraged research and the quest for knowledge (Spielvogel 224).

Despite this renewal of classical learning, hunger for knowledge and the development of the humanist view of the world, the most common form of punishment continued to be corporal. "We are told that 72,000 major and minor thieves were hanged during the reign of Henry VIII,

and that under Elizabeth vagabonds were strung up in rows, as many as three and four hundred at a time” (Rusche 19). The fact that death is a punishment for minor offenses such as homelessness and theft indicates that the society of the Renaissance still believed that corporal punishment was the most effective. “Corporal punishment appears to have been widespread in schools throughout the world, from the earliest times” (Adams 134). This most often involved whipping in some form, but could also be boxing of the ears. The French did not outlaw torture until 1792; no doubt this was somehow connected to the French Revolution (Adams 90). In England, the death penalty could be levied on any person deemed to be a danger to society, even if the crime they had committed did not warrant such a severe punishment (Rusche 19). This means that a person could be killed for simply seeming to be a dangerous criminal, even if their initial transgressions were fairly mild. Similar to the judgment of Purgatory, this is yet another example of how the common man was not in charge of his own fate. When a person can be killed for looking ‘shifty’, it robs the populous of the control of their fates, which is illustrated in the idea that humanity is judged by God and has no control where they end up in the afterlife. There appears to me more governmental punishment in the Renaissance than in the Middle Ages, but it is possible that this has to do with the centralization of governments and a desire to weed out dissenters.

Since the Renaissance was concerned with the renewal of classical culture and the reexamination of contemporary culture, it is no surprise that the church chose this time to reaffirm some of their key teachings. The doctrine of Purgatory was reaffirmed during Session XXV of the Council of Trent, which took place December 3<sup>rd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> of 1563. Essentially it was agreed upon that Purgatory existed to cleanse the soul of remaining sin after death so that the person could become clean and thus was able to enter the kingdom of Heaven. It also stated



that these souls in Purgatory were aided by masses, prayers and offerings that are given to the Church in honor of the deceased (“Council”). A family could shorten the amount of time that their loved one was in Purgatory, but only if they were able to pay for a priest to offer mass or indulgences for the family member in question. There is an obvious disparity between what the wealthy would be able to offer and what the poor would be able to do. This is very similar to the Middle Ages when the aristocracy had the option of paying fines in place of corporal punishment as retribution for their wrong doings. Essentially, the wealthy could pay a fine to the church and their loved one would be absolved of their corporal purgatorial punishment. It was a disagreement over the topic of indulgences as well as other sections of Catholic doctrine that led to the Protestant Reformation. This great upheaval in the Christian faith began when a monk named Martin Luther had disagreements with another clergy member over the sale of indulgences in 1517 (Brace 138). Thus it can be said that the doctrine of Purgatory takes a significant role in the religious environment of the Renaissance.

The most iconic piece of literature concerning Purgatory is Dante Alighieri’s *Purgatorio* from the epic poem, *The Divine Comedy*. Even though it was written at the beginning of the 1300s this epic poem is considered Renaissance literature because of its humanistic ideas and reliance on great figure of antiquity. This poem paints a picture of Purgatory as a mountain to be traversed by Dante and the guardian of the gates, Cato. Cato was a Roman who fought alongside Pompey against Caesar, and when defeat was imminent, he took his own life rather than be captured (Carroll 5). His presence illustrates the growing interest in ancient literature during the Renaissance because he is a historical figure from Rome who was not a Christian and thus would not have been studied by the Catholic Church. Purgatory is arranged very similarly to the Inferno in that there are many levels of Purgatory depending on the sin for which the soul is being

punished. The terraces from bottom to top are pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust; which ascend in an order of decreasing severity because human pride keeps the soul farthest from God. The punishment for pride is carrying heavy rocks and Dante writes

...those souls were crawling under by such under such burdens

as we at times may dream of. Laden thus,

unequally tormented, weary, bent,

they circle the First Cornice round and round,

purging away the world's foul sediment. (Alighieri 374)

Theirs was a never-ending circle of punishment by bearing a physical burden, instead of just the emotional one that they had inflicted upon others while they were alive on the Earth. At the top of Purgatory is the Garden of Eden because it is the closest Earth has ever been to Heaven (Carroll xxiii). This structure of Purgatory is very orderly and easy for the mind to comprehend, which is indicative of the logic with which the Renaissance thinkers approached the world.



A second artistic representation from the era is very closely linked to Dante's work, because it is a fresco entitled *Dante and His Poems* by Domenico di Michelino that was painted in 1465, only about one hundred years after the poem was written. The fact that Dante is so much closer to the viewer makes him seem larger-than-life and in control of the dominion he has over his work. Purgatory is located behind Dante and there are representations of souls undergoing purgatorial punishment. On the second tier the people are burdened down by heavy stones and on the first tier a man looks to the larger than life angel for guidance and comfort, but it seems that his group is being forced to move along. There is no comfort in Purgatory while the soul is working off its sins. This connects to the idea that during the Renaissance there were various punishments for different crimes, but as in Purgatory the perpetrator is helpless to decide which one they will be forced to perform. The differentiation of punishment and the way in which it is artistically depicted are very similar in the Medieval and Renaissance periods, which can be



connected to the fact that corporal punishment continued to be common practice. The fact that the mountain is wider on the bottom than on the top indicates that there are less people who have achieved the less rigorous punishments and still fewer who finally make it to the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden is also very evident at the top of Purgatory, because that location is the closest a soul can come to Heaven without being completely cleansed. It is evident that some commentary exists concerning humanity's lack of control in regards to the afterlife, because a larger-than-life angel makes sure that there is no rest for the weary and ignores supplications of the sinners in Purgatory. The pre-modern era was a time of very little control over your own destiny, when most people were peasants and lived in the same area their entire lives and death was always a possibility, whether in war, from plague or by accident. These factors influenced the way in which humanity viewed Purgatory, because if life was already difficult, then there was no reason for it to get better.

The contemporary era has brought many changes technologically and mentally to a world that once attributed lightening to Zeus and famine to the wrath of an angry God. Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century our world has been characterized by consumerism, technological advances, world wars and an interest in the workings of the mind. Freud published many volumes of studies concerning the workings of the human brain and its unconscious and repressed desires (Spielvogel 452). Both World War I and II demonstrated that there is nothing gentlemanly about war and the technology can have terrible force (Spielvogel 531). Postmodern thought is prevalent in society, where the world is no longer black and white but rather a shade of gray and reality and knowledge are relative (Spielvogel 577). Globalization is making the world feel smaller every day and it is possible to contact someone on the other side of the globe in seconds

(Spielvogel 579). Similar to the drastic change that society has seen in the last century, the concept of punishment has changed as well.

Even though the Middle Ages and Renaissance saw a variety of corporal punishments as acceptable and healthy for society, a lot has changed in five hundred years. Punishment is no longer corporal as it once was because there is a current awareness of abuse and how it can be inflicted psychologically, sexually and physically. There has been much debate in the past several years over the issue of spanking children, with one side claiming that it is corporal punishment and the other that it is an effective way to discipline. As recent as the 1990s there have been incidents of children being thrashed in schools in the United Kingdom, but this act, which was once accepted, has come under harsh criticism (Adams 142-144). These uses of corporal punishment to teach children a lesson were extremely common in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and if parents hit children, then it is expected that God would too. In the modern era such corporal punishment is no longer accepted in the Western World and has been replaced by the psychological punishment of imprisonment.

There has been a marked movement away from corporal punishment and towards psychological punishment in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Many view the trial process and jail sentence as a sort of psychological punishment because of the massive amounts of waiting that are involved and the fact that the defendant has little to no control over their fate or how long their waiting period lasts (Adams 60-61). It is possible to be arrested on charges and have to wait months before a trial is granted. Imagine that for days and years even, an inmate is subjected to repetitious monotony and is never being allowed to make a choice for themselves. Jail is structured in this manner as to not kill a prisoner but to make them desire the freedom to decide when to brush their teeth or do other tasks which those who are free take for granted. This desire



would lead them to conform to societal rules and once they are released, become productive members of society. One of the few corporal punishments that is still permissible in the Western World is the death penalty, but this is only used for the most heinous of crimes. There are many countries who have declared the death penalty to be barbaric and thus only two European or North American nations, the United States and Belarus, still use corporal (in the form of capital) punishment in their judicial systems (Rogers). This is an obvious change from a world where a person could receive capital punishment for stealing a loaf of bread.

Even though the world is changing and developing at a mind-boggling rate, the Catholic Church has continued to maintain the same doctrine concerning Purgatory since the 12th century. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which was updated in 1997, states that Purgatory is a place where Heaven-bound souls are purified and made ready for everlasting peace. This is essentially the same doctrine that was formalized at the Council of Lyon in 1274. The current Catechism also upholds the need to pray for the dead who are undergoing their purgatorial punishment (“Catechism”). Although this might seem strange to maintain a doctrine after nearly a thousand years of social change, the power of the Catholic Church lies in its devotion to tradition and the maintenance of its rituals. Catholic Purgatory has stayed a constant even when the world is changing rapidly around it.

The contemporary change from corporal to psychological punishment is represented in many artistic mediums, such as film, television, painting, sculpture and theatre. Discussed below are two examples, one from film and the other from theatre. Both of these examples are located in a modern representation of Purgatory. The first is a movie from the early 1990s called *Defending Your Life* starring Albert Brooks and Meryl Streep. In this movie Purgatory is a place where life is put on trial and if a soul did not make the most of the time on Earth, then they are

forced to be reborn in another body and try again. The soul is allowed more than one lifetime to make the most of their corporal being because of the hope that the wisdom learned in one life will be transferred to the next. The soul can only stay in this cycle for a certain number of lifetimes though, and at a certain point it is determined that the soul cannot learn everything that it needs to in order to enter Heaven. After every lifetime the soul goes to Judgment City (Purgatory) to have its life scrutinized and a decision made as to whether it can go to Heaven or it must return to Earth. Returning to Earth causes the soul to be stuck in an uncertain waiting period because unless the wisdom from one lifetime transfers into another, the soul has no idea how it must live life differently in order to reach its heavenly goal. The idea of judgment taking place in Purgatory is not unique to *Defending Your Life* and can be linked to the judgment scenes in the *Vision of Thurkill*. This exposes the roots of the psychological punishment in this movie and suggests that the modern vision of Purgatory is not that different from the medieval. The movie relates to contemporary psychological punishment because it forces the person to not only face their own failings on Earth, but possibly wait another lifetime before they are allowed into Heaven. Although acceptance into Heaven is based upon earthly actions, the soul is unaware of what exact actions will lead to eternal peace and thus is at the mercy of a higher power. The soul is imprisoned in a cycle of lifetimes until they are judged to be worthy enough to leave Earth forever, much like the modern inmate must wait for a higher power to allow them out of prison.

The second example of modern Purgatory is a play by Stephen Adly Guirgis entitled *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. In this artistic representation, Purgatory consists of a modern, grungy New York-style place with the central point being a court named Hope. This is where people are tried for their earthly sins and if found innocent are allowed to ascend to Heaven, but if they are found guilty, they are forced to languish in Purgatory or Hell. The idea of judgment

You need to apply this same level of attention to the remainder of your document. taking place in Purgatory connects the play to the medieval *Vision of Thurkill*, both of which describe this location in the afterlife as being both a place for sentencing as well as punishment. Souls have no control over their court dates in Hope or their method to entering Heaven, as some work in an area for a certain number of years while others are found innocent and allowed to ascend into the lap of the Lord. Judas begins in Hell and is later sentenced to stay there by the jury, but it is revealed at the very end of the play that the divisions in the afterlife are not real. The audience is forced to wait through an entire two and half hour play to learn that the location is a false construct by souls who do not find themselves worthy of God's grace. Jesus tells Judas, "What if I were to tell you that you are not here? That you are with me in my kingdom even now, and that you have been there since the morning of my ascension and that you have never left?" (Guirgis 73). This suggests that the psychological punishment in Purgatory is self-imposed and that humanity is in control of their location in the afterlife. Regardless of the who is inflicting the punishment on whom, it still mirrors the modern conception of punishment as psychological, where waiting for the unknown and revisiting past transgressions are a constant punishment in and of themselves.

Although the artistic interpretations of Purgatory have gone through major changes in the past century, the doctrine on which it is based has remained the same. The world has changed drastically in the past thousand years, from an agrarian society ruled by feudal lords to an urban society ruled by technology. Punishment within society has also changed throughout the centuries from receiving the sentence of hanging for stealing a loaf of bread to the endless waiting of the modern judicial system. The change in society and constancy in Catholic doctrine would lead one to believe that the societal forces are the cause of the changing image of

Purgatory and that, as Gloria says in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, “...every civilization rearranges the cosmic furniture differently” (Guirgis).

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